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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Papua New Guinea, His Excellency the Honourable Mr. Kilroy Genia, M.P.

Mr. Genia (Papua New Guinea): On behalf of the people and Government of Papua New Guinea, I wish to join previous speakers in conveying our felicitations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. The Papua New Guinea delegation is confident that you will guide this session to a successful conclusion.

May I also take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for his energetic, visionary and outstanding stewardship in facilitating the work of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

At the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, world leaders reaffirmed their resolute commitment to uphold the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. They pledged their support for the pivotal role of the United Nations in building international cooperation and partnership in development and in engendering trust and confidence among nations and peoples in order to foster world peace and security.

No human institution is perfect, and the United Nations is no exception. It has nonetheless withstood the test of time. The shortcomings of our collective endeavours have necessitated efforts for constructive reform and measures directed at strengthening and reinvigorating the United Nations, our paramount Organization.

Papua New Guinea has always believed, and continues to believe, in the utility of the United Nations, and in this context commends the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his bold initiative in proposing for our consideration a comprehensive reform package aimed at making the United Nations more responsive to the changing international situation.

In his proposal, the Secretary-General emphasized that the principal objective of the reform is not only to make the United Nations efficient and effective but also to improve its delivery system and operational coherency through management innovations. Papua New Guinea fully supports these principal objectives of the proposed reform package. The overall direction of reform should and must be tailored towards strengthening the United Nations system in order to better serve the needs and aspirations of its Members. It makes eminent sense for us to move from merely debating issues to determining practical steps and strategies that would make our Organization more responsive and capable of meeting the ever-changing challenges of globalization and modernization as we enter the next century.

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These changes are necessary to enhance public confidence in the United Nations and to improve its capacity to build partnership between Governments and civil society. This will enable the Organization to meet the daunting challenges of economic development faced by our global community and those posed by the political and ideological differences afflicting nations today.

The proposed reforms stem in part from the need to ensure the operational viability and sustainability of the activities of the United Nations. Papua New Guinea is fully aware of the predicament of the United Nations — starved of much needed financial resources for its operations to the point of being insolvent. We cannot allow such a situation to persist.

We agree with and applaud the role of the Organization in development — in framing structures and policies that will enhance the technological capacities of developing countries and improve their effective participation in international markets, including their access to credit and their ability to acquire information technologies.

Regarding priorities, Papua New Guinea is gravely concerned at the lack of full implementation of a number of initiatives and programmes undertaken by the United Nations, in particular with respect to such critical areas as the empowerment of women, child care, the protection of our global environment, poverty eradication and sustainable development.

It is critical to be aware that organizational reform alone cannot guarantee the effective delivery of services. The United Nations needs more than bureaucratic and technocratic innovations. It needs our concerted action. It is therefore imperative that we as Members commit ourselves to encouraging the development of genuine partnerships and seriously take urgent and practical measures to remove the obstacles and barriers that exist between developed and developing countries.

In addition to its traditional role in the maintenance of peace and security, this paramount international body must be equipped and strengthened to do more in framing international treaties and standards and in encouraging international norms and practices that will bring about equitable economic development and social justice for all peoples. Equity and justice in all spheres of development should be our ultimate objective.

Consistent with the reform process, we see merit and value in revising the regional groupings within the context of the United Nations to reflect present geopolitical realities. In this regard, we support the calls made by New Zealand and others in the South Pacific region for the consideration of their inclusion in the Asia-Pacific grouping.

I now turn to the question of the reform of the Security Council, which is an important decision-making organ of the United Nations on global security concerns. As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Papua New Guinea fully supports the declaration adopted by the non-aligned Ministers at the twelfth Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries — held in New Delhi, India, in April 1997 — and reaffirmed more recently in New York on 26 September last. The composition and *modus operandi* of the Security Council must reflect the changes that have taken place since its formative years, and, more importantly, must mirror current geopolitical and economic realities.

Papua New Guinea believes that the reform and expansion of the Security Council should be guided by the principle of the sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical distribution. It should also take into consideration the need for transparency, accountability and democratization of the working methods and procedures of the Security Council, including its decision-making processes.

The reform of the Security Council should be comprehensive and based on universal values in order to enhance its legitimacy. More importantly, the reformed Security Council should allow for equitable representation by developing countries. On the question of permanent membership, we reiterate our position on the inclusion of Japan and Germany from the industrialized States and also support the fair representation of developing countries as additional permanent members, particularly those that have the capacity and ability to contribute to world affairs.

Papua New Guinea strongly supports the view that there should be no distinction in terms of the privileges accorded to permanent members, particularly in relation to the exercise of the veto power. In other words, all permanent members of a reformed Security Council should enjoy the same privileges so as to maintain geopolitical equity and balance.

It is indeed ironic to note in this Assembly the contradictory positions of some of our members, who purport to be champions and defenders of human rights issues and yet continue to maintain colonial situations that directly deny genuine democratic representation and the rights of people to govern themselves in a manner consistent with their political aspirations.

Having achieved decolonization in many parts of the globe — of which the United Nations can be proud — we would be failing in our noble duty if we were to ignore the concerns and aspirations of the peoples of the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, some of them in the South Pacific, which are still struggling to establish their own political autonomy, and even to exercise their right of self-determination. Given the importance we attach to this issue, Papua New Guinea is gravely concerned that recent initiatives in relation to the United Nations programme on decolonization have seriously eroded the importance of the political essence of that programme and have impacted negatively on it. We hope that this anomaly can be resolved quickly and amicably.

Papua New Guinea wishes to recall that many of us represented here would not have taken our place in this forum had we not been allowed the opportunity to exercise that right. We therefore urge this body to adopt a more serious and aggressive approach to the implementation of the decolonization programme of the United Nations. At the recent meeting of the South Pacific Forum in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, the States members of the South Pacific Forum reaffirmed their support for the decolonization process.

The Non-Self-Governing Territory of New Caledonia continues to be of great interest to the South Pacific Forum, and we have over the years followed developments there in relation to the Matignon Accords. Early this year we mounted, with the help of the Government of France and the authorities in New Caledonia, a Forum ministerial mission to the Territory. We are pleased to note that all parties to the Matignon Accords appear to be satisfied with the progress made in implementing the Accords. Papua New Guinea continues to recognize the right of the people of New Caledonia to self-determination and urges all parties in the Territory to maintain their commitment to reaching a negotiated solution as a successor arrangement to the 1988 Matignon Accords. This negotiated successor solution must take into account the wishes of all communities, including concerns on the changing demographic composition of New Caledonia.

The economic prosperity and political developments and changes in the Asia-Pacific region continue to be of interest to Papua New Guinea. As a special observer of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), we were heartened by the initiatives taken by ASEAN leaders to bring the belligerent parties in Cambodia to the table for urgent negotiations for peace and security. It is our hope that the people of that ancient civilization will return to their daily lives in a peaceful and secure environment once more.

The ongoing difficulties in the Korean peninsula and the competing territorial claims in the South China Sea continue to concern my Government, because they all have a bearing on the overall maintenance of regional and international security, as well as on other forms of cooperation.

While we do not understate the importance and value of our diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, we have, however, on a number of occasions urged both Beijing and Taipei to resolve their fundamental differences with the aim of maintaining an amicable coexistence.

In view of the changing international climate characterized by global interdependence, it is important for all peace-loving States to make every effort to minimize areas of hostility that could seriously undermine international peace and security. The United Nations therefore has an obligation to assist in maintaining a secure global environment in which economic growth and other forms of development can continue to thrive for the benefit and common good of all peoples of the world.

In its efforts to attain economic prosperity, Papua New Guinea has had to engage all economic entities in our trade and commercial relations. Consistent with our obligation to assure our people of a better future, we intend to expand our economic ties with trading partners that have demonstrated their willingness to assist without our having to compromise various aspects of our existing relations with our partners.

It is in this regard that we recognize Taiwan as a dynamic economy and trading partner without compromising our one-China policy. Since Taiwan participates in such organizations as the Asian Development Bank, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, the World Trade Organization and the South Pacific Forum as a dialogue partner, I cannot

see any reason why we should not deal directly with Taiwan on trade and economic matters.

The world has witnessed once again the derailment of the peace process in the Middle East. We call on the leaders of both Israel and Palestine to cooperate with United Nations efforts to reach an amicable solution to avert further violence, and to focus on the path to peace. Papua New Guinea strongly believes that the rights of the Palestinian people over their homeland and their freedom to establish their own Government and identity are paramount among the conditions that could lead to enduring peace.

We are encouraged to see positive signs of appeasement in Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Nevertheless, given the tense situation that exists in that region, we urge those in positions of authority, including all leaders in that part of the world, to resolve their differences peacefully to prevent further bloodshed. In this context, we are heartened to see the Organization of African Unity playing a critical role in the endeavour to bring about peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. The crisis in Sierra Leone needs urgent attention, and we join the Secretary-General's call to the leaders of the military junta and support his continuing efforts to encourage them to respect the rule of law and make every effort to restore democracy in that country.

On the regional front, Papua New Guinea is taking a major initiative in setting up the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC) regional centre in Port Moresby. We would like to offer our gratitude for the support given by the States members of the South Pacific Forum in our efforts to set up this centre. The objective of the APEC centre is to assist in the area of capacity-building in the economies of 13 small island developing States in our region as we prepare to meet the challenges of globalization and liberalization. We are also grateful for the support provided by the United Nations Development Programme.

At the recent summit of the Heads of the South Pacific Forum countries, the leaders reaffirmed our commitment to maintaining a nuclear-free zone in the South Pacific consistent with the overall objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We welcomed the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and reiterated our support for banning the transboundary movement of radioactive and other hazardous wastes in the region, and in particular for the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage and the draft Convention on Supplementary Funding.

In this context, we welcome the ratification by the United Kingdom of the protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty, known as the Treaty of Rarotonga. We are still hopeful that the United States of America will do likewise, and call upon it to do so at the earliest possible opportunity.

At the last session of the General Assembly, we sought and forged new agreements, including our relationship with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. We also expressed our support for an international convention to ban all anti-personnel mines, and have participated in the Ottawa process, most recently at Oslo. Like other members of this body, Papua New Guinea is making the necessary arrangements to become a party to that historic Treaty when it opens for signature later this year.

In a few months we will usher in the International Year of the Ocean. Like other South Pacific Forum countries, Papua New Guinea has an affinity for the sea which cannot be overstated. It is, for the greater part, the source of our livelihood.

We urge the United Nations to continue to play a major role in ensuring global awareness of sustainable use, conservation and management of marine resources. In this regard, we call on the international community to coordinate efforts to implement the priorities agreed upon during the special session of the General Assembly on the environment and sustainable development. We are gravely concerned that much of the outcome of the special session will remain the province of historians and academics, if not given practical effect. We urge that greater attention be given to the special needs and concerns of the small island developing countries.

An environmental issue of great importance and relevance to Papua New Guinea and other small island States in the South Pacific region is the impact of greenhouse gas emissions, which are causing rising sea levels and changing weather patterns in many member countries, especially low lying island nations.

This issue was given priority attention at the recent South Pacific Forum meeting in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, where the Forum countries expressed deep concerns

about the insufficient progress made by the countries which contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions.

As a member of the South Pacific Forum, Papua New Guinea strongly urges all countries concerned to make additional efforts in meeting commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). We also urge all parties to the FCCC to consider fully the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) draft protocol during the ongoing negotiations, especially at the forthcoming Kyoto conference, in order to pursue the greatest possible level of net reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions by means of a legally binding protocol or other legal instrument.

On Bougainville, let me reassure this body that Papua New Guinea, as I stated earlier this year in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, remains fully committed to a peaceful and enduring resolution of the crisis. It is absolutely clear that the people of Papua New Guinea, including the majority of Bougainvillians, want peace and will pursue a peaceful solution by every available means. As in the past, we will continue to give the people of Bougainville every opportunity to participate fully in the reconciliation process.

My Government is mindful of the effects of the crisis on our region, particularly of the spillover effects on our close neighbours. We wish to take this opportunity to thank the neighbouring countries in our region for their assistance in the peace process. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of Australia and, in particular, New Zealand, in initiating and facilitating the peace conference of all Bougainvillian leaders which resulted in the signing of the Burnham Declaration last July. A follow-up meeting — Burnham Talks II — between Bougainvillian leaders and representatives of Papua New Guinea's Government is currently under way in New Zealand. We are optimistic and confident that we can resolve the crisis within the framework of the Papua New Guinea Constitution.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank, on behalf of my Government and people, the previous and current Governments of the Solomon Islands and their people for their tolerance and understanding, particularly when they have had to bear the full weight of the spillover effects. I want to thank them also for agreeing with us to put in place in the last 12 months two important bilateral treaties: the comprehensive framework treaty guiding bilateral relations and the basic border agreement. These treaties set the parameters within which our bilateral relations are conducted, including the legal mechanisms for consultation and dialogue relating to a more effective management of our common border, which is critical to the containment of the Bougainville crisis, including its spillover effects.

My Government also offers its gratitude to the leaders of the South Pacific Forum for recognizing Bougainville as an integral part of Papua New Guinea, and for their acknowledgment of the peace efforts concerning Bougainville by all parties involved, including Bougainvillians and their leaders, the Papua New Guinea Government, and the Governments of the Solomon Islands, Australia and New Zealand.

In conclusion, let me echo what other speakers have said before me. As we prepare to meet the dawn of the next millennium, let us commit ourselves to building genuine partnerships in development that will ensure a secure environment for our present and future generations.

We do not and should not expect guarantees, but we shall look far and wide in our search for safeguards. We do not want and shall not seek handouts; however, we demand equity and greater participation to foster and expand opportunities for our peoples.

It is only through the development of genuine partnerships and the enhancement of equity and justice in global trade and investments that we can improve the socio-economic conditions of our people, ensure their prosperity, and guarantee the safety of our global environment, without which there is no hope for the attainment of enduring peace in our societies today and in future. Only when such peace has been attained can we truly say that we have lived up to our obligations, for the interests and common good of humanity.

The President: I now call on the Minister-Secretary General of the Presidency of Mauritania, His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Ould Minnih.

Mr. Ould Minnih (Mauritania) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to say how pleased we are to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly. We are convinced that your great experience and wisdom will promote the success of this session. I can assure you of the cooperation of the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania in reaching the results to which we all aspire.

I take this opportunity also to express our gratitude to and esteem for your predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for the great efforts made and the positive results obtained during his term of office as President of the past session.

I should also like to express our appreciation to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the tireless efforts he has made since his assumption to his high office to promote the universality of the United Nations and to strengthen its credibility and capacity to discharge its responsibilities despite a difficult international situation.

In this context, we welcome the initiative taken by the Secretary-General in submitting an outline for reform, which includes a number of provisions that could improve the functioning of the Organization. An in-depth study of this outline will undoubtedly facilitate its adoption by all members of the international community.

While the end of the cold war has created a favourable climate for the emergence of a new era of international dialogue and cooperation, the improvement of the economic conditions of developing countries remains an urgent need.

Indeed, with the growing trend towards globalization and liberalization in international trade, the developing countries are facing a number of obstacles, including slower growth, falling export revenues, and a reduction in the volume of investments and in official development assistance. All of this may prevent these countries from becoming part of the global economy and further marginalize them if the international community does not mobilize swiftly to provide them with the aid they need to meet these challenges.

The increase in the volume of debt is another obstacle to the economic and social development efforts undertaken by these countries for the benefit of their peoples. In this respect the 1996 report of the World Bank notes that the burden of debt in many of the least developed countries has reached such a level that it is virtually impossible for them to continue with their economic reforms, which are of crucial importance; and that this situation is exacerbated by the fact that in 1996 official development assistance, which can reduce the effect of indebtedness, fell to its lowest level in real terms in 23 years.

International strategies do not seem to have succeeded adequately in easing the burden of debt in the developing countries, which is why more effective solutions, such as increasing official development assistance, must be found so that these countries' development priorities can be financed.

Despite the fragility of the international economic situation, progress has been made in various areas due to efforts by the United Nations to promote international cooperation and to define policies and strategies capable of meeting the economic, social and environmental challenges that confront the world today. For instance, several important international meetings and conferences have been organized during the past five years under the auspices of the United Nations, resulting in some decisions and undertakings relating to the main issues of development that seek to promote international cooperation and coordination for development.

I am referring in particular to the World Summit for Children, held in New York; the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro; the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna; the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo; the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen; the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing; the World Food Summit, held in Rome; the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held in Istanbul; and the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, devoted to the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, which took place in New York last June.

These initiatives attest to the determination of the United Nations to take into account the concerns and interests of the international community with regard to a whole range of development issues. The United Nations should continue on this path and seek to ensure implementation of the decisions adopted.

Under the enlightened guidance of its President, His Excellency Mr. Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania has completed the process of establishing constitutional institutions within the framework of a democratic process that began 11 years ago. This ensures that these institutions will be able to function normally within a multi-party system and a State based on the rule of law. My country is proud to state that we do not hold any political prisoners.

Fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression and a multi-party system, as well as trade union freedoms, are guaranteed and enjoyed by 20 political parties and a large number of organizations and

trades unions that can pursue their activities in complete freedom. Likewise, there are dozens of newspapers and magazines that reflect various political and intellectual sensibilities.

Furthermore, in keeping with the provisions of our Constitution, the two Houses of Parliament have been replenished, and for the second time presidential elections, set for 12 December this year, are being prepared in a climate of freedom, peace and stability.

A global strategy that seeks to raise the level of our people's economic and social development and to consolidate democracy has been implemented. This goes hand in hand with the democratic process and is in keeping with the following comments of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya:

> "We are seeking to build a modern society capable of accompanying the world on its march forward and of assimilating scientific and technological information; a society aware of the challenges of our time and working to meet those challenges".

In this context, the promotion of women's rights and the campaign against illiteracy figure prominently in our development programmes. A sustained effort is also being made to provide as many of our citizens as possible with access to education, jobs and health services, thereby guaranteeing them a better standard of living. The results obtained in this regard are satisfactory. Indeed, the enrolment rate in our schools has reached 86 per cent and health care coverage for our people has been significantly extended towards meeting the goal defined by the World Health Organization, which is health for all by the year 2000. Drinking water supply systems have been built in several regions, and the main cities of the country now have electricity.

Within the framework of a huge programme to provide access to remote towns in the interior of the country, several new roads have been built, and a modern telecommunications system now covers the entire country.

These important achievements attest to our firm desire to combat underdevelopment in all its forms, relying first on our own resources and then on the support of our development partners.

I should like here to express my gratitude to all brotherly and friendly countries and international organizations and agencies, as well as to non-governmental organizations, for their support of my country's efforts in this area.

One of the positive features of international relations today, which has led to the strengthening of democracy and respect for human rights in several regions of the world, is the international community's effort to consolidate fundamental principles such as transparency, the representative character of power, the primacy of law, and the independence of the judiciary.

While we can be satisfied with the significant progress made in this area, we should not lose sight of the fact that democracy cannot be limited to the narrow confines of each individual country; it must extend to relations between nations. In this respect we attach particular importance to the efforts made by the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council. We also hope that these efforts will lead to greater transparency in the decision-making processes of the Security Council as well as to improved working methods.

In a different area, we need to adopt a new form of preventive diplomacy that is capable of preventing conflicts and the human tragedies that result from them, such as those we have witnessed recently and those we see today and yet are unable to resolve.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania expresses its profound concern at the difficulties encountered in the peace process and at the negative developments in the region of the Middle East, which result from non-compliance with agreements concluded and commitments undertaken in accordance with the established timetable.

My country believes that there can be no just and lasting peace in the Middle East unless Israel withdraws from all the occupied Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds, the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon, and unless the Palestinian people regain their right to create an independent State on their territory.

My country also calls for the taking of the steps necessary for the resumption of the peace negotiations among all the parties concerned. We are convinced that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and

425 (1978) and the principle of "land for peace" remain the basis of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

Furthermore, we call upon the two sponsors of the peace process to redouble their efforts to ensure that the chance for peace is not lost and the hopes for a new era of cooperation and concord, in which the potential of the region is dedicated to economic development and social promotion, are not dashed.

In this context, my country calls for the lifting of the embargo placed on the Palestinian people, and we ask the international community to mobilize the necessary resources to finance the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East so that it can do its job properly.

In the Gulf region, the aftermath of the war continues to impede the normalization of the situation. The Islamic Republic of Mauritania, while reaffirming its dedication to international law and its commitment to respecting the principles thereof, again states its rejection of any violation of Kuwait's independence, its territorial integrity and the security of its citizens, and calls for a rapid solution to the question of Kuwaiti prisoners.

We also reaffirm our steadfast position that no measures should be taken that threaten Iraq's unity and territorial integrity, and we call for the lifting of the embargo imposed against the Iraqi people, so that an end can be put to their suffering. We hope that the implementation of the resolution regarding "oil for food" can help to achieve this.

Still on the same region, we reiterate our support for the United Arab Emirates in its desire to regain its sovereignty over the islands of Greater Tumb, Lesser Tumb and Abu Mussa.

In the Arab Maghreb, my country is acting in cooperation with its brothers for the attainment of the aspirations of the States of the Union of the Arab Maghreb.

On the subject of Western Sahara, my country welcomed with great satisfaction the agreement which was concluded on 16 September last in Houston in the United States under the auspices of Mr. James Baker III, the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, and which deals with the main issues that have hampered the implementation of the settlement plan for Western Sahara worked out by the United Nations in coordination with the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The Islamic Republic of Mauritania reaffirms its willingness to do everything it can to promote implementation of the plan for the settlement of this dispute.

Furthermore, we call for the lifting of the embargo imposed against the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and we hope that the efforts of the League of Arab States and of the OAU to find a peaceful solution based on the principles of international law, a solution that will put an end to this situation so detrimental to the Libyan people and all other Maghreb peoples, will be given favourable consideration.

On the question of Africa we hope that the meeting of the Security Council at the ministerial level held two weeks ago to consider the situation in Africa will contribute to the achievement of appropriate solutions to the problems of the continent.

My country also wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the principles of dialogue and negotiation as the only way to overcome crises and conflicts and to defuse pockets of tension which exist in several parts of the continent. Accordingly, my country renews its support for efforts to revitalize the central organ of the OAU that deals with prevention, management and settlement of conflicts in Africa.

As for the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros, my country hopes that the efforts undertaken by the League of Arab States and the OAU will contribute to the settlement of the crisis in that country.

We hope also that in Somalia the parties concerned will have recourse to constructive dialogue to reach a solution that will guarantee harmony and stability.

In regard to the Republic of Congo, my country hopes that a peaceful solution that will restore security and stability will be found.

We hope that there will again be a normal situation in Sierra Leone, in keeping with international law.

The United Nations is today required more than ever before to react more vigorously to the problems facing the international community. The end of the cold war, and the international community's awareness of the importance of coordination and dialogue, are positive factors for giving our Organization the necessary momentum to enable it to meet the challenges and to establish the bases for a new international order founded

on the principles of justice and solidarity and guaranteeing the maintenance of peace and security throughout the world.

There is no doubt also that being aware of the magnitude of the challenges and the need to pool our efforts to meet them is the best way to restore our hope of moving closer to the fulfilment of the ideal that was consecrated at the ceremonies commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization:

> "We the peoples of the United Nations united for a better world".

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea, His Excellency Mr. Haile Weldensae.

Mr. Weldensae (Eritrea): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. Eritrea joins in the expressions of recognition of your attributes by previous speakers. You are presiding over an Assembly session that will be remembered for focusing not only on crucial international issues but also on the reform of our Organization. While wishing you success in your leadership, I also assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Eritrean delegation.

I also seize this opportunity to pay tribute to the Permanent Representative of Malaysia, His Excellency Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the way he conducted the work of the fifty-first session, and to thank him for his far-sighted proposal on the reform of the Security Council.

Likewise, I wish to extend sincere gratitude to the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the efficient and dynamic way he is discharging his duties.

We are meeting at a critical juncture of history. After almost 50 years the dark and ominous clouds of world conflict no longer loom threateningly over the horizon. Those grim days are over. In the last few years we have taken great strides towards making the world safer for future generations.

The road to disarmament has been made easier with the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by 146 world leaders in 1996. The world has also accelerated efforts to eliminate anti-personnel landmines. More importantly, there seem to be clear indications of a great change in values, attitudes and perceptions which will foster the creation of cooperative relationships among the States of the world, thus promoting new perspectives of common policies to solve mutual problems.

True, we should, at the same time, remember that old and new conflicts continue to plague the world. Thus, destabilizing factors such as the marginalization of nations and peoples, transnational crimes, the use of violence and the threat of violence as instruments of national policy still haunt our planet. In addition, old and new conflicts in Europe, Asia and Africa seem to threaten or reverse the global gains achieved in the last few years. It is hoped that these will be the exceptions rather than the rule and, as relics of the past, will be swept away in the near future. In this respect, it is encouraging to note that the Security Council held, during the second week of the General Assembly, an unprecedented ministerial meeting on the security situation in Africa. This will encourage the United Nations to play a more meaningful and credible role in supporting regional initiatives to solve regional conflicts.

Thus, perhaps for the first time, there is an opportunity to undertake a common, realistic and critical reappraisal of our involvement in world affairs and to come to an agreement on the role of the United Nations. The Members of the United Nations, both old and new, must welcome this opportunity to demonstrate their readiness to tackle these new global problems and the full intent of the contribution they can make to empower the United Nations to become a strong and relevant force in international relations.

In recent years, there have been persistent requests for a change in the structure and mission of the United Nations. There is undoubtedly need for reform. The most obvious reason is the fact that today the Organization remains essentially the same entity that was created over 50 years ago in San Francisco. Its membership has more than tripled since then, with at least two dozen new States joining since 1990. Yet, its structure remains essentially the same. Also, the problems that face the world are so radically different that there is a dire need for the reorganization of priorities in the Organization's mission.

Although it is true that different States, or groups of States, will have different perceptions of what needs to be changed, the following are, in the opinion of my delegation, the most important issues that must be taken into consideration if change is to be meaningful and credible.

First, there are only two major challenges confronting the world today: development and security. These are, of course, interdependent. It is evident that there will not be any development without peace. Yet, without development that improves the livelihood of people, the task of guaranteeing peace will be extremely difficult. The assaults on these two problems must be made simultaneously, and all of our actions should be taken with an eye to solving both. Hitherto, emphasis has been on security to the detriment of development, with catastrophic results. Since the reason for this disparity, namely the cold war, no longer exists, it should not be too difficult to put a little more emphasis on development. Lately, however, there has been a growing emphasis on the political rather than the economic aspects of development — that is, on democracy and human rights. True, people everywhere are clamouring for the right to be free from dictatorships and to participate meaningfully in decisions which affect their lives, and they must be strongly supported in this. However, it must also be realized that the meaning of human rights and democracy is being challenged and questioned, and they are being given different interpretations. Whatever the case, any effort to apply standards of democracy and human rights, however defined, will not be successful unless the root causes of underdevelopment and poverty are effectively addressed. Any reform of the United Nations should, therefore, empower it to promote sustained economic growth in developing countries even more energetically. Only this will help to develop good governance, that is, democracy and human rights and stability, and will militate against inter- and intra-State conflicts.

Secondly, the United Nations belongs to all of its Members. Thus, the increased participation of all of its Members in its activities is a right that must be exercised to safeguard against the arbitrary abuse of its powers and functions. Such a development would enhance immeasurably its effectiveness as a guarantor of peace. It is hardly possible to speak sincerely of a universal organization whose major decisions, taken by a few, will be binding upon the rest of the world. It is no longer acceptable to the rest of the world that a relatively small number of States, even after the proposed increase of membership in its major decision-making organs, should, in the name of international peace and security, dictate the agenda of the United Nations or impose a system of international conduct. Indeed, it is sad to note that the same countries that make democracy a condition in their foreign policies are adamant about maintaining an elite club of States in the consideration of Security Council membership.

In any case, any future system must eschew cold-war doctrines and principles and give equal emphasis to social justice. Peace and justice are interrelated and cannot be mutually exclusive. There is thus no longer any excuse to deny equitable representation in the major organs of the Organization and undemocratically to deprive States of the opportunity to participate in the making of decisions which will affect their destinies and the welfare of their peoples. The United Nations will be in danger of being marginalized if it does not take into account the needs and aspirations of most of its Members and does not build trust between its Members, big and small, rich and poor, weak and strong. It can build such trust and mutual confidence only if it makes sure that democratic norms and principles are accepted and practised by all its Members.

Thirdly, this is the age of decentralization. Whenever possible, therefore, the United Nations must create the appropriate modalities to enable regional organizations to assume tasks which they will be able to execute more effectively. To this end, the General Assembly must take the necessary steps to ensure a relevant role for regional and even subregional organizations, without losing its leadership role or eliminating its support.

Fourthly, the urgency of reform is recognized, but it would be counterproductive to rush into decisions whose implications we shall live to regret. Those who resent the veto power of the five permanent members of the Security Council would be well advised to take the time, and to allow others to take the necessary time, to study issues before they make final decisions on such weighty matters.

Since its independence in 1993, Eritrea has embarked on a course of nation-building, reconstruction and renewal. In this endeavour, we were inspired by the eternal ideas of our struggle, which enshrines justice, equity, human rights and equal opportunity to all, including, in particular, hitherto marginalized groups.

In the last six years — for we liberated our country two years prior to our declaration of formal independence — we have taken the necessary measures to establish a regime of peace and marked stability in a region of the world in which they have been absent for several decades; consolidate our profoundly democratic tradition of struggle by adopting a new constitution and holding our first democratic regional elections; create a development-oriented State and government structure;

ensure a corruption-free society; build schools and health facilities in most regions of our country; and formulate an economic and financial policy which fosters an environment that encourages investment and has thus made our country a new frontier of widely expanding opportunities. These policies have yielded good political, economic and social dividends that have enabled us to look to the future with hope and optimism.

In our foreign relations, we have been guided by two basic principles. The first is our deep conviction that, where there is goodwill, all can be resolved through peaceful negotiation without recourse to violence. A natural corollary of this belief is the firm conviction that all States, regardless of their ideological orientation, can live together in peace. This tenet underlies Eritrean foreign policy and has guided its relations with all the countries of the two regions — the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa — in which it is located.

This has enabled it to establish an exemplary, close tie of friendship with Ethiopia, our erstwhile adversary. These close relations and friendship have widely manifested themselves over the last four years as we have coordinated activities in the political, economic and social fields. It has also helped us to defuse conflict and to arrive at a mutual agreement to resolve the conflict between us and the Republic of Yemen over the Eritrean Hanish-Zukar archipelago on the Red Sea by the peaceful means of arbitration. The State of Eritrea has time and again affirmed its adherence to the Agreement of principles of 21 May 1996 and expressed its commitment to abide by the decisions of the Arbitration Tribunal. Since both parties have committed themselves to abide by the decision of the Arbitration Tribunal, my Government feels that the dispute is already solved.

Unfortunately, even the best of goodwill and intentions could not help avert bad relations with our other neighbour, the Sudan, which is bent on conducting a bad-neighbour policy, is at odds with almost all of its neighbours and with others beyond, and has, because of its avowed policy of exporting terrorism abroad, become an international pariah.

The second pillar of Eritrean foreign policy is an unswerving devotion to justice and equity. This policy emanates from Eritrea's subjection to the horrors of aggression and colonization at the height of the cold war. At that time, our pleas to the United Nations and the international community fell on deaf ears. Because of this, we are convinced that there are no substitutes for justice and equality for the purpose of ensuring the maintenance of peace in the world. These, too, have influenced our search for friendship and cooperation with our neighbours as well as with other States. They have also underlined our efforts to bring peace and stability to our region and to achieve an early end to the fratricidal conflict in Somalia, a just and fair resolution of the Sudanese conflict, and the development of economic, commercial and political relations among countries of the region.

The conflict that has ravaged the Sudan for about two decades must be brought to an end. The absence of peace in the Sudan has had severe consequences for most of its neighbours. Thus, they have a substantial interest in the restoration of lasting peace, security and stability in the Sudan.

To this end, those of its neighbours which are members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have, both collectively and individually, exerted much effort during the past seven years to promote an inter-Sudanese peace process. None of the members of IGAD has an interest other than ushering in peace in the Sudan. All have favoured and encouraged dialogue, compromise and tolerance. They were convinced that peace could be achieved on the basis of the Declaration of Principles formulated by IGAD after a serious assessment of the objective reality prevailing in the country. It is regrettable that until last month the Sudanese regime had done all it could to subvert the peace process it had willingly accepted. It has now accepted the Declaration of Principles. We hope it will respect its commitment and implement the provisions of that Declaration. If and when it does, it will bring our initiative to a successful conclusion and usher in peace and stability in the Sudan.

I also wish to refer to the efforts made by IGAD concerning the tragic situation which still exists in Somalia. It will be recalled that the members of IGAD have both collectively and individually expressed deep concern that this grave situation has continued for many years and that no workable solution has yet been found. Many attempts to bring the concerned parties to the negotiating table have failed. Where they have succeeded, no agreement could be achieved. Where agreements have been reached, they have been broken soon after.

In the global context, my country is fully convinced that international cooperation is of vital importance. To ensure sustainable development, Eritrea has been engaged in fostering regional integration and international

cooperation because it is firmly aware of the importance of partnership in development. Eritrea believes that partnership can be ensured only when independence of choice and recognition of equality and mutuality exist.

We in Eritrea are convinced that the world will benefit from a strong, purposeful and dynamic United Nations. We will therefore contribute, however modestly, to the creation of the conditions necessary to make it a real force which will ensure international peace and security that is broadly defined and premised on development.

We note with great interest and welcome the Secretary-General's proposals for reform. We are studying them with care. We fully endorse the values and principles underlying the objectives of reform, as enunciated in the Secretary-General's address to the current Assembly, particularly his reference to the new paradigms of cooperation.

Today, I assure the General Assembly of our commitment to the United Nations and to its new principles and purposes and its vision of a new world, as well as its sincere commitment to promoting genuine peace and development and defending the cause of small, weak States and vulnerable peoples. One would think that a nation like Eritrea — which had been systematically betrayed by the United Nations during the past four decades — would have second thoughts about committing itself to the Organization. However, we always believed that there was nothing wrong with the message of the United Nations, and we had subscribed to it even in our days of struggle. Surely we cannot blame the message for the shortsightedness of the messengers. We urge others who share our feelings to join us in giving the Organization the wholehearted support it now deserves and needs if it is going to be as effective as we wish it to be.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tourism and Information of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, His Excellency the Honourable Alpian R. O. Allen.

Mr. Allen (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your unanimous election. I am confident that under your leadership this session of the General Assembly is well placed to address the important issues on its agenda.

Commendation is due His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail for the balanced and effective guidance he provided during the just concluded session.

My delegation takes this opportunity to offer heartfelt congratulations to our new Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his assumption of such a high and noble office. He will no doubt bring fresh insights to bear on the Herculean tasks and problems confronting the United Nations. We wish to indicate our support for his initiatives for reforming the United Nations.

In spite of the many achievements of the United Nations, much remains to be done. The world is still plagued by poverty, all manner of diseases — some even defying medical science — terrorism, regional conflict and the menace of drugs. There can be no real peace or security if millions of people go to bed hungry. There can be no comfort if the rich man turns his back on the poor man and treats him as a statistic. It seems as if the moral obligation to help the disadvantaged has been totally abandoned in some quarters.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains a very peaceful country, with its cherished democratic institutions intact. Recently our judicial system, which is known historically for its integrity, was put under microscopic examination with a view to discrediting it. The test results reveal a clean bill of health. This painful period in our history has taught us many lessons. We know now that there are friends who will smile with us while plotting our execution. Today it is true to say that might is not right and that a small nation like ours can have the fortitude to withstand attacks even from those who may have the strength of Samson.

Our banana pains continue to intensify. The prognosis appears to be very bleak. The recent World Trade Organization (WTO) ruling has left us dazed and helpless. The concept of every man being his brother's keeper has been shattered.Can we survive? Will our cries for help go unheeded? What about our neighbours? Are they deaf or uncaring? I know it now. Money and greed have been elevated to the status of a religion, and care and concern are now regarded as a vice. Our future is now on a life-support system. However, I am confident that our resourcefulness and faith will see us through.

My delegation welcomes the idea of the establishment of a zone of peace in the Middle East. We call on all parties to take urgent and practical steps towards the establishment of such a zone in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions adopted by consensus. We also call for a halt to the distribution and production of conventional weapons, which have caused immense suffering, especially in this century.

Recent acts of terrorism have given cause for great concern. Why should innocent people continue to perish? The United Nations Charter provides for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Both sides have rights which must be respected. Violence can never be a solution. Let us put reason before bloodshed.

We should not rush to write the obituary for the Middle East peace process. The wounds inflicted are not fatal; the haemorrhaging can be stopped and the process revived.

I look forward to the day when peace will break out in that ancient region, when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares and into pruning hooks their spears.

Our own hemisphere is not without problems. Our region believes in neighbourly love, and any attempt to inflict pain and unjustified hardship on any of us affects all of us. Those who exert pressure, be it economic or legal, will find no comfort in our bosom. The strategy of diplomatic isolation has failed. It is clear that in the new millennium, we cannot do business as usual. In hemispheric matters, muscular diplomacy should give way to moral suasion.

During this year both Suriname and Haiti have become full members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). We take this opportunity to welcome them once again. We also note the progress made since the reestablishment of democracy in Haiti, and we urge the international community to continue to offer technical, material and financial help. That will enable the people of that country to deepen the process of democracy and to promote the country's sustained economic and social development. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sympathy to the Government of Haiti in regard to the recent tragedy at sea.

In our region, nature has manifested its mighty force, and the people in Montserrat are now fleeing from an angry volcano that erupts periodically. Our hearts are with the people there, and we have done whatever we can to assist. Efforts to help are continuing at home even as I speak. Let us hope that the full extent of the plight of the people of Montserrat is realized by those who are in a position to make a substantial contribution. Now is the time to stand up and be counted.

My delegation welcomes the convening in 1998 of a special session of the United Nations General Assembly dedicated to the fight against the illicit production, sale, demand for and distribution of illicit drugs and psychotropic substances. Those who traffic in this trade can properly be regarded as merchants of death. International cooperation is the only way to combat this menace.

I wish at this time to pay tribute to a woman who has died recently and whose name evokes mystic reverence. Her legacy is one of compassion. I speak of Mother Teresa. She embraced the poor, the sick and the suffering, the favoured and the dispossessed. Her life shows that even in this cruel world there are still people who are willing to put others before themselves in unrewarded service. She lived her religion to the fullest. May she rest in peace.

It is our hope that the issue regarding Taiwan can be resolved peacefully. We urge those on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to hold discussions and negotiate a peaceful solution in the reunification process to which both sides are committed. We of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are very grateful for the assistance we have received from Taiwan, and we would hope that the international community would respect its contribution to development and that it may find its place in the international community.

My delegation will continue to support the fundamental rights of all peoples to self-determination. We are heartened to see the emergence into sovereign statehood and independence of peoples once under colonial domination or foreign occupation. We reaffirm the inalienable right of peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories to self-determination.

The reform and expansion of the Security Council is of paramount importance as we approach the dawn of a new millennium. My delegation wishes to emphasize that the ongoing discussions on the reform and expansion of the Security Council must take into account the principle of sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical distribution. There is also the need for transparency, accountability and democratization.

My delegation has no objection to the inclusion of additional developed countries on the Council as permanent members, but we fully support the proposal that all regions be represented in a permanent capacity, including Latin America and the Caribbean. The reform cannot be handled piecemeal. We will not support any change that does not include Latin America and the Caribbean Community.

Expansion of the Council must not and cannot be limited to permanent seats. It is necessary to increase the number of non-permanent seats to give more countries an opportunity to serve on the Council within a relatively shorter time-frame. In addition, we recommend that the regional non-permanent seats be rotated among the countries that are desirous of serving on the Council.

In this process we must remember and be guided by the word "democracy". If this body is to have the moral authority to restore or encourage democracy in some Member States, it must first become fully democratic.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains a loyal and dedicated member of the United Nations committed to upholding the noble principles of the Charter. Now more than ever before we must reaffirm our collective respect for the fundamental principles of the Charter. The small nations of the world must receive constant reassurances from the larger nations that their interests will be safeguarded, their sovereignty respected.

When we speak of the United Nations, we must project our vision beyond this building. In the end it is our deeds that will count. Yes, it is what we do to the least of our brethren. Promises and statements have no meaning unless they can be translated into action. This body must never be perceived as a gathering of word merchants but, rather, as one of action-oriented men and women.

Our planet's resources are finite, and even the most economically developed States cannot pursue unilateral policies in isolation from the rest of the world.

We stand firm in the belief that the United Nations is still the best hope for the world. This hope must be grounded in action, in a firm resolve to act decisively in the best interests of this great institution — indeed in the interest of all humanity and untainted by the narrow national interests that have dogged our path during the last five decades.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Kenya, His Excellency the Honourable Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka.

Mr. Musyoka (Kenya): Allow me, at the outset, to convey to you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation, my warm congratulations on your election as the President of the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that your work will meet with great success throughout the session, particularly in guiding us in the task of reforming and restructuring the United Nations in preparation for the challenges ahead.

I would like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, Permanent Representative of Malaysia, for the excellent manner in which he conducted our deliberations during the previous session.

I also take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his vision and devotion to the service of the United Nations.

The creation of the United Nations by the founding fathers was a courageous decision. Although their objectives are yet to be fully realized, Kenya is convinced that they are still valid, and we remain fully committed to their achievement. The world has undergone tremendous transformation since the signing of the United Nations Charter in San Francisco 52 years ago. We have witnessed the end of the East-West military and political rivalry, which at times crippled decision-making in the United Nations system. New opportunities have emerged and the role of the United Nations has diversified, with the international community placing greater expectations on the Organization.

Under the able leadership of His Excellency President Daniel T. arap Moi, Kenya has undertaken bold political and economic reforms whose benefits we are beginning to realize. We are committed and determined to continue forging national unity to enhance the process of democratization and socio-economic development.

It is against this background that I wish to address some of the issues contained in the agenda of this session.

In recapping the events of the past years, we note that the United Nations has made efforts to secure international peace and security. We regret that the peace dividend expected after the cold war has not materialized. Instead, the total volume of assistance to developing countries has declined, and the scourge of conflicts in various parts of the world, and in Africa in particular, has revealed the frightening proportions of ethnic and nationalistic hostilities and humanitarian crises. Intra-State conflicts have torn some of our nations apart, as they pose threats to security, social cohesion and economic progress.

Some of these conflicts have proved difficult to prevent, manage or resolve. They have caused diversion

of resources from developmental purposes to non-productive use. Kenya believes in the peaceful resolution of conflicts and encourages the settlement of disputes through negotiations, mediation, conciliation and arbitration as opposed to use of force. His Excellency President Daniel T. arap Moi, along with other leaders in Africa, has spent considerable time and resources coordinating peace initiatives in southern Sudan, Somalia, Burundi, Rwanda and the former Zaire, among other places.

We are happy to report that the stalled peace process concerning the conflict in southern Sudan was re-energized following the extraordinary Summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) held in Nairobi on 8 and 9 July 1997, at which the Sudanese Government accepted the Declaration of Principles, which calls on all factions to work together. In addition, during the IGAD Ministerial meeting held in Nairobi on 22 September 1997, the parties to the conflict agreed on 28 October 1997 as the date for the next meeting. Kenya believes that the parties must have the courage and political will to negotiate in good faith. It is equally important for the international community to actively support this process by making financial resources available as well as by exerting pressure on all the parties to rededicate themselves to finding a lasting solution to the conflict. We pay tribute to the IGAD Partnership Forum for its supportive role vis-à-vis the IGAD initiative.

The prolonged conflict in Somalia remains a matter of great concern to Kenya. The continued absence of that sisterly State among the family of nations is indeed regrettable. We maintain that reconciliation of the warring factions is critical to finding a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement to the conflict. The international community, in particular the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations, has an important role in assisting in the process of reconciliation.

The crisis in the Republic of Congo is similarly a matter of grave concern to Kenya. We are concerned that three months have elapsed since the President of Gabon, Omar Bongo, called upon the Security Council to deploy a United Nations force to assist in normalizing the situation in that country. We wish to reiterate the OAU position stated at the recent Security Council ministerial meeting -- namely, that there is a need for urgent intervention by the United Nations.

Likewise, the situation in Burundi is also of concern to my country. We support the efforts by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere to find a negotiated solution to the problem in that country. We urge President Pierre Buyoya to take into account the concerns of the subregion and the international community in general and work towards a negotiated settlement.

Kenya wishes to reiterate the position taken on the conflict in Sierra Leone by the thirty-third session of the OAU Conference of Heads of State and Government, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in June 1997, that the international community desist from recognizing the military junta. We support the efforts by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the search for a solution to the crisis in that country and urge the junta to return Sierra Leone to constitutional rule. We are convinced that quick and effective action by the international community is necessary, as underscored by President Tejan Kabbah during his intervention before the Assembly on 1 October last.

My Government is also concerned with the political developments in the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros. We support the efforts by the Organization of African Unity aimed at bringing the Government and other parties together with a view to seeking a solution to the problem. We urge the people of the Comoros to work towards maintaining the sovereignty, national unity and integrity of their country.

Kenya has been involved in the peace process in Angola since 1975. We are encouraged by the progress that has been made towards finding a peaceful solution to the prolonged crisis in that country. However, we wish to reiterate the need for both parties, in particular UNITA, to cooperate fully in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, the agreed framework for peace in Angola. At this point in time, any alternative will only hurt the people of Angola.

On a positive note, we are encouraged by the cooperation between the United Nations and ECOWAS that enabled Liberia to hold successful elections, won by President Taylor. In this regard, we commend the efforts of ECOWAS, the international community and the Liberian people for the manner in which the elections were concluded. We wish Liberia success in the difficult task of reconstruction and post-conflict peace-building.

Kenya believes that a continued United Nations presence and focused support of the international

community are critical in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia, including the repatriation and reintegration of refugees. We welcome the Secretary-General's intention to establish a peace-building support office in Monrovia upon the termination of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL). We are convinced that this will assist the new Government in its efforts to rebuild Liberia's economy and contribute towards the promotion of peace and stability in the region.

Kenya welcomes the recent movements towards the resumption of negotiations by the parties to the conflict in the Middle East. We wish to urge them to honour in good faith the Oslo agreements they have entered into and to refrain from activities that have the potential of undermining the peace process. There is a need for the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resume dialogue in order to resolve all outstanding issues. Kenya will continue to support the parties in their search for a just, durable and comprehensive peace.

We also welcome the Secretary-General's initiative in Cyprus and the efforts of the international community to bring the parties to the negotiating table. In this respect, we applaud the face-to-face intercommunal talks held in Switzerland on 11 August last. The world would like to see both the Greek and Turkish Cypriots resolve their problem of more than two decades. There is therefore a need to intensify efforts to find a durable solution to that problem. We call upon the international community to also support the talks by exerting pressure on both sides and to refrain from activities that might be seen as impeding the peace process.

The humanitarian emergencies accompanying these conflicts require an urgent response from the international community. Thousands of people are affected in one way or another. Refugees and displaced persons are experiencing varying degrees of suffering on a daily basis. While reiterating our support for the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees and of the international community, we feel that it is vital to enhance closer coordination and cooperation between all actors to facilitate the complementarity of efforts.

We are committed to the promotion of universal humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law. Kenya, indeed, has been host to thousands of refugees from our region. We have stretched our meagre resources to accommodate the refugees but regret that some of them have abused our hospitality and caused problems of insecurity in our own country. We urge the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to work closely with the Government of Kenya in monitoring and verifying the genuineness of the refugees in order to address this problem.

Kenya and other African countries have contributed troops to various United Nations peacekeeping missions worldwide. We view the reluctance by the international community to support operations in Africa as a departure from the Charter responsibilities of the United Nations. We recognize that concerted efforts by the countries affected and others in the region are necessary in the settlement of conflicts. The involvement of regional organizations in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts should therefore not entail any derogation of the responsibilities of the United Nations. We wish to reaffirm that the role of peacekeeping and peace enforcement throughout the world must remain the responsibility of the United Nations and in particular of the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter. In this respect, Africa expects to see swift handling of the conflict in the Congo (Brazzaville), in much the same way as was the case in the Balkans.

My country welcomes the results of the Oslo Diplomatic Conference on an International Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Landmines. This constitutes a significant contribution to the realization of ending the use of weapons that have wreaked havoc in many parts of the world. Kenya commends the international community for its efforts to bring to an end the use of these deadly weapons.

A prominent feature in recent years has been the increasing globalization of the world economy. Although the global economy continues to show modest growth, with the highest performance being experienced in East Asia, Africa's economy still lags behind. The continent remains highly vulnerable to adverse international economic policies and natural calamities due to its limited capacity to respond. The economy is characterized by poverty and underdevelopment. The per capita incomes are the lowest in the world, and most of the countries are unable to feed their growing population. At the same time, the marginalization of the continent continues, with unsustainable external debt being a major factor.

We welcome the measures taken by the international community at the bilateral and multilateral levels to mitigate the debt burden. It is evident, however, that Africa's indebtedness continues to be a major constraint

in the economic development of the continent despite efforts by many countries to implement economic reforms. These efforts have not met with adequate bilateral and multilateral financial support, resulting in limited prospects for economic growth. We underscore that the reduction or cancellation of both the bilateral and multilateral debt of the heavily indebted countries needs serious consideration. Kenya urges the international community to seriously address the external debt crisis.

In addition, we regret that the agreed official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent has not been met by most donor countries but has, as a matter of fact, declined to approximately 0.25 per cent. Hence, the implementation of the United Nations Agenda for Development should address all these issues and place Africa in its proper perspective. We appeal to the industrialized countries to reverse the declining trend in official development assistance and to honour their commitments by attaining the agreed target. Kenya believes that to achieve good results, development must be people-oriented and involve all actors, with emphasis on human resource development, application of science and technology, and the creation of employment and income-generating opportunities.

Africa has abundant human and natural resources, which, if properly harnessed, could generate wealth for the people of the continent. Kenya is committed to the promotion of South-South cooperation and urges that necessary measures be taken to ensure effective collaboration. In this regard, Kenya and other countries of the region are promoting regional cooperation in order to integrate our economies in the long run. We wish to appeal to our partners to complement these efforts by intensifying technical and financial support. We underscore that without social and economic progress it is difficult to achieve peace.

The liberalization of trade regimes and the promotion of an open and secure multilateral trading system are vital requirements for the acceleration of economic development. As a member of the World Trade Organization, Kenya is committed to the liberalization of both trade and investment regimes. In this regard, unilateral protectionist actions, which are inconsistent with multilateral trade agreements, should not be allowed to interfere with these arrangements.

Kenya is committed to the implementation of the outcomes of the various United Nations conferences, such as the Rio United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development, the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, the Istanbul United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the Rome World Food Summit, among others. We are disappointed that the outcome of these conferences has to a large extent remained unimplemented. In the course of implementing Agenda 21, my country has initiated innovative steps to protect and preserve the ecosystem. These include public awareness programmes, environmental education and the Great Rift Valley Conservancy Programme, which ensures integrated utilization of land. We urge the international community to honour their commitments by making available new and additional resources for the attainment of the intended objectives.

As the United Nations continues to introduce measures to ensure reduction of waste, it is imperative that the Organization ensure maximal and rational use of the existing facilities within the United Nations system. As host to the only United Nations headquarters in the developing world, we are concerned that the facilities at the Nairobi offices are underutilized. In this regard, Kenya wishes to see maximal utilization of the facilities available in Nairobi, the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). We therefore wish to urge that General Assembly resolutions requiring meetings to be held at their respective headquarters should, to the extent possible, be adhered to.

We are further concerned that both UNEP and Habitat suffer from inadequate funding despite their enormous potential. We note that these two United Nations bodies need to be strengthened by streamlining their administrative and financial management. Above all, they require adequate and predictable financial resources from all sources in order to fulfil their mandates. In this context, we would like to request the Secretary-General to expedite the implementation of measures expected to revitalize the two institutions. In addition, we wish to appeal to the donor community to honour their financial commitments and release any blocked funds to enhance the effective operation of UNEP and Habitat. Kenya will continue to ensure that the United Nations offices in Nairobi operate in a smooth environment.

The challenges facing the Organization in the next millennium are many and complex. It is imperative that the Organization be restructured to enable it respond

adequately to new priorities and challenges. In this respect, we wish to commend the Secretary-General for unveiling reform measures and proposals that will form the basis of our discussion. We urge the Secretary-General to speedily implement measures within his mandate to reduce waste and ensure effective utilization of existing facilities and better coordination and cooperation within the United Nations.

Kenya is committed to the reform of the United Nations and will continue to participate actively in the debate. We expect that the reforms will be carried out with transparency, and in full compliance with the democratic principles and purposes of the Charter. In our view, the Organization requires not radical transformation but rather the strengthening and modification of its structures and organs to enhance its effectiveness.

In reforming the United Nations, it is of paramount importance for Member States to recognize that unpaid contributions constitute a major obstacle to the effectiveness of the Organization. We are concerned that the United Nations is facing a financial crisis which is due basically to Member States not honouring their Charter obligations. For the United Nations to fulfil its mandate effectively, there is need for stable, predictable and adequate financing. We therefore urge Member States to take concrete action to clear their arrears without conditionalities. Furthermore, adjustment of the scale of assessments ought to be the result of a collective decision to redistribute the financial burden while bearing in mind the principle of capacity to pay.

Kenya considers that the Security Council should be reformed to make it possible to achieve transparency, accountability, democratization and balanced regional representation. We reaffirm the position of the Organization of African Unity calling for the enlargement of the Council in both categories of membership to a total of 26 seats. We reiterate that Africa should be allocated at least two permanent and five non-permanent seats in the reformed Council.

We also support reforms in the economic and social fields which should enhance complementarity and better coordination of the activities of the Council. The Economic and Social Council should assume effective coordination of international policies and the activities of the specialized agencies. Further, it should ensure mobilization of resources for the operational activities which are critical for the achievement of socio-economic development. We are convinced that strengthening and revitalizing the functions of the Economic and Social Council will accelerate development, particularly in the areas of poverty alleviation, environment degradation, health and humanitarian assistance, among other areas.

I should like to conclude my statement by reaffirming Kenya's readiness to support measures that will strengthen the United Nations and turn it into a more focused and integrated Organization able to steer humanity into the next millennium. Let us all strive to make the Organization more effective in serving mankind in the years to come. We are determined to make our contribution.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

A number of delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Sarris (Greece): I have asked to speak in order to respond to a statement made by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Turkey last Friday, 3 October. It is regrettable that Turkey has chosen this debate to attack my country and introduce an element of strident confrontation at the present time, when the international community is conscientiously striving for bridge-building and peaceful cooperation in addressing the outstanding world issues. The Turkish Deputy Permanent Representative abused his right of reply in order to present Greece as a party at fault, by using doubletalk, distortion and misinformation.

I would like to refer to the statement my Minister for Foreign Affairs made to the Assembly in order to confirm that we remain committed to a positive approach in our relations with Turkey — without forgetting, however, that none of the problems we are facing are of our own making: because it is a fact and not propaganda that since 1974 Turkey has presented an open-ended agenda of claims that converge into the single objective of revising the status quo in the Aegean; that Greece has been under the pressure of systematic Turkish claims over our sovereign rights and responsibilities conferred by international agreements; that since January 1996 Greece has faced the aggressive manifestations of direct territorial claims, which our neighbour was prepared to back with military action; that Turkey, challenging

existing treaties after more than 70 years, has successively claimed the Imia islets as well as an undetermined number of islands in the Aegean, the island of Gavdhos, which is south-west of Crete, and unspecified "grey areas in the Aegean", "any island that is not specifically mentioned by name in a treaty", and "geographical formations whose status is not determined by international agreements".

In order to deny these facts, the Turkish Deputy Permanent Representative has distorted realities. Such a distortion is the Turkish representative's allegation that Greece ignores international law as far as its national airspace is concerned, although Turkey had respected from 1931 the delimitation of Greek airspace to 10 nautical miles.

Concurrently, Turkey has tried to dispute Greece's right to extend its territorial waters up to 12 nautical miles, a right stemming from international law as codified by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and has repeatedly threatened that the exercise of this legitimate right would be a cause of war, thus violating Article 2 of the United Nations Charter.

Moreover, Turkey seeks to impose a status of defencelessness on the Aegean islands in order to have them at the mercy of the considerable military forces concentrated on the Turkish coast. The examples of the Cyprus invasion of 1974 and the repeated invasions of Iraqi soil by the Turkish army clearly convince us of the soundness of our decision to take all necessary measures in accordance with international law in order to prevent any new instances of such "peacemaking" by our neighbours.

The legal regime in the Aegean is clearly defined by international treaties, and especially by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Boundaries exist there, either through international agreements or through provisions of international law. Turkey asserts that the whole range of arbitrary claims it has put forward concerning Greek sovereignty or sovereign rights in the Aegean should be "resolved through dialogue", a convenient code for negotiations without reference to the rules and principles of international law. Such a dialogue is unacceptable for any country, because it would legitimize claims that have no foundation in international law. One cannot conduct a dialogue with a neighbour that intends to acquire parts of one's sovereign territory.

Greece has proposed a step-by-step procedure destined to improve the state of relations with Turkey. The procedure provides for the reference by Turkey of its territorial claim over the islet of Imia to the International Court of Justice, for recourse by Greece and Turkey to the same international instance to resolve the outstanding issue of the delimitation of the continental shelf and for resumption of the dialogue previously conducted on a series of bilateral issues.

Contrary to my colleague's assertion, the Turkish attitude can hardly be considered constructive, positive or conciliatory. The repeated bellicose statements by Mr. Bulent Ecevit, Deputy Prime Minister, in the past few months, clearly illustrate the contrary. Nor can the statement by the former Turkish Prime Minister, Mr. Mesut Yilmaz, that "international law does not apply in the case of the Aegean".

Turkey has constantly rejected the realistic approach offered by successive Greek Governments after 1976 and up to 1995 by undermining all our efforts and proposals for the improvement and normalization of our relations.

The bottom line in Greek-Turkish relations is really very simple, as far as Greece is concerned. On our side, we have no claims or designs of any kind against Turkey. We have no demands of Turkey other than good-neighbourly relations based on respect for the principles of international law and treaties. We hope that Turkey will respond to this and channel its behaviour into accepted norms of conduct between neighbouring States. Such an attitude would have made the present exchange totally unnecessary.

Through our Madrid joint statement, by which we stand, it has been put to our neighbour to respect the existing overall framework of international law and treaties that has defined our borders and relations and has stood unchallenged for the last 70 years, and to desist from aggressive policies, refrain from territorial claims and submit to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice any argument it might deem valid concerning the islet of Imia.

We call again upon Turkey to submit to the general jurisdiction of the Court, as Greece has done, and to follow our realistic approach for clearing up the issues that shadow our relations, within the spirit prescribed by our Madrid statement.

Mr. Osman (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): In his statement today before this Assembly, the representative of the Eritrean regime made certain naive

and absurd accusations against my country, and I take the floor in order to exercise my right of reply.

At the outset I would like to make it clear that the target of this response is the Eritrean regime, which is immature, and not, in any case, the brotherly, gracious people of Eritrea, which has bonds of history, blood and common destiny with the people of the Sudan.

From this rostrum, I would like to emphasize that we have the greatest respect for the people of Eritrea, but the Eritrean regime is an instrument for destruction, murder and subversion in our region. Its policies are directed by a tyrant and an ingrate dictator, well known to the people of Eritrea and to the people of the Sudan as well. He shared the livelihood of the people of the Sudan in his darkest moments during the more than 20 years that he lived in the Sudan.

Unlike all the other neighbours of the Sudan who have spoken before this Assembly in support of the peace efforts under way in the Sudan, the last of whom was the Foreign Minister of Kenya, who only a few minutes ago and underscored the commitment of the Government of the Sudan to peace, only the representative of the Eritrean regime spoke of bad relations between the Sudan and its neighbouring countries.

The attempt by the Eritrean regime to attack my country is a crude way of obscuring the miserable and severe living conditions of the fraternal Eritrean people since the People's Front took control in that country. The representative of Eritrea spoke about issues that are an invention of his own sick imagination which is attracted by murder and destruction — a sick mind which is unable to comprehend bare facts. The Sudan, which hosted the head of the Eritrean regime for over 20 years — longer than he has lived in his own country — has a heritage, tradition, and morality which prevent it from pursuing policies of terrorism and the targeting of others.

It is common knowledge that many elements of the Eritrean leadership have been liquidated by the Eritrean regime. The President of the Eritrean regime knows better than anyone that the lists are quite long and are well known to the Eritrean people, in addition to that regime's terrorist adventures. Indeed, the regime's adventures have spread even in the past few months, beyond Eritrea's borders. Thus, the regime has liquidated elements opposed to it in neighbouring countries.

The Eritrean regime, which arrogated to itself the right to make false accusations against the Sudan, should instead have addressed the miseries it has brought upon the Eritrean people by its foolish policies. Those policies resulted in preventing hundreds of thousands of Eritrean refugees who are hosted by the Sudan from returning home; selectivity has become the hallmark of Eritrean policy regarding the return of refugees. This is a gross violation of all international norms that guarantee the basic and humanitarian rights of refugees.

Examples of the arbitrariness and intransigence of the Eritrean regime abound. We cite here the announcement by the Eritrean president at a forum in Asmara that the Eritrean army is in a state of war with the Sudan and that their objective is to bring down the Sudanese Government. He also said that the Eritrean regime's support for the Sudanese opposition to achieve this goal is without limits. When the Agence France Presse correspondent, Ruth Simon, reported that announcement she was arrested and detained by the Eritrean regime. These facts show the extent of the threat posed by the Eritrean President to international and regional peace and security.

The Eritrean regime flouted international treaties when it took the step, unprecedented in the history of international relations, of handing over the premises of the Sudanese Embassy to armed Sudanese opposition movements which are supported by the Eritrean regime. It also encouraged terrorists and hijackers by refusing to extradite those who hijacked a Sudanese civil aircraft and treating them as heroes — an action that was also in violation of international treaties.

Does the representative of a regime that declares war against a neighbouring State and publicly threatens to bring down its Government have the right to be among us as a Member of an international Organization whose first objective is to promote world peace and security? Does the representative of a regime that has accused this international Organization, as he did in his statement today, of betraying his country have the right to talk about peace in the Sudan?

The clearest answer is provided by the fact that this regime expelled from its territory the personnel of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, thereby insulting them. That is yet another clear example of how the Eritrean regime does not respect international treaties and laws which regulate asylum and the status of refugees. The adventures of the

Eritrean regime and its dictator President, which demonstrate lack of maturity and responsibility, are not secrets to be divulged. Their actions are but a noisy coverup for invading neighbouring countries, violating their territorial integrity, sovereignty and territorial waters. Such acts show no respect for other African States, deriding them on their soil, as was done when Eritrea attended a meeting of the Organization of African Unity for the first time as an independent State.

In conclusion, we do not intend to waste the Assembly's time by responding to the attacks of the irresponsible Eritrean regime. We do not wish to encumber the time of this session devoted to the reform of the Organization. However, we have been forced to respond by the false accusations made by the representative of the Eritrean regime, which does not appreciate the value of the international Organization and its reform. We would like to underscore the fact that the whole world is well aware of the burdens shouldered by the Sudan for over 30 years in support of the cause of the Eritrean people. We are not boasting of this to the people of Eritrea because we owed these efforts to them but we want to emphasize here the inferiority complexes which grip the sick mind of the leadership of the Eritrean regime, which displayed a sense of ingratitude by invading the territory of the Sudan, assaulting it with tanks, and planting landmines inside our territory, thus terrorizing innocent citizens. These are the citizens who hosted that regime and shared with it their resources for over three decades.

The President: I would like to remind members that the time limit for the second intervention is five minutes. This applies to the next speaker, the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Tanç (Turkey): The response of the representative of Greece to the questions in my statement in right of reply did not provide any answers clarifying the position of Greece with regard to international law or to Greece's selective approach to its implementation. Greece does not seem to be ready to explain its double standards with respect to its national airspace and sea space in the Aegean, to the demilitarized status of the eastern Aegean islands or, finally, to the modalities of resolving the existing territorial disputes in the Aegean Sea.

We asked how Greece could explain its militarization of the eastern Aegean islands in violation of international treaties, and the inconsistency in claiming different airspace and sea space in contravention of the relevant Chicago Convention.

The representative of Greece also referred to Turkey's territorial claims on Greece. We would like to stress that in each and every case at issue between Turkey and Greece it can easily be seen that it is a Greek claim to which Turkey has responded. In this respect, I would like to refer to the programme of the former Greek Government which establishes a zone of areas of Greek domination, including northern Epir, Macedonia, Thrace, the Aegean region of Turkey, the eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus. It is these expansionist policies to which Turkey has been forced to respond.

In a letter addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 1995 we asked whether Greece was ready to announce that it did not harbour any territorial ambitions with regard to the "lost homelands" to which they refer in their programme. I am happy to hear that there is movement in that direction.

With regard to the statement of the Greek Foreign Minister claiming that Greece has 3,000 islands in the Aegean, Greece should remember that in the Aegean only the islands to which sovereignty was explicitly transferred by international treaties belong to Greece. The Aegean Sea as a whole has never belonged to Greece. There are two countries — Turkey and Greece — on the two sides of that Sea. When one country threatens to extend its territorial seas up to 12 miles, in effect wanting to acquire 70 per cent of that Sea and cutting off the lifeline of the other coastal State to international waters, it is an infringement of the rights of that coastal State. Greece's rights in the Aegean end where Turkey's rights begin. It is not Turkey which is advancing any claims in the Aegean Sea; it is only responding to the threat that Greece is advancing to extend its waters up to 12 miles, thereby cutting off international waters to Turkey.

The misrepresentation of facts on the Greek side is most striking and alarming when it comes to the issue of Cyprus, which also took up a large part of the statement of the Greek Foreign Minister. Greece would like third parties to believe that the question of Cyprus began in 1974, when in response to the Greek attempt to annex the island to Greece, Turkey, on the basis of the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, exercised its right to intervene to prevent Greece's annexation of Cyprus. If the Cyprus issue began in 1974, how can Greece explain why the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus was deployed in the island in 1964, 33 years ago and 10 years before Turkey was forced to intervene in order to protect the Turkish Cypriots from Greek Cypriot aggression?

I need only quote from Archbishop Makarios, the Greek Cypriot leader, who spoke in the Security Council on 19 July, immediately following the Greek coup. It is a long statement, elaborating on the invasion by Greece, and so as not to take up the time of the Assembly I am going to read only one of the last sentences of the statement. Archbishop Makarios said:

> "The coup of the Greek junta is an invasion, and from its consequences the whole people of Cyprus suffers, both Greeks and Turks." [*S/PV.1780, para. 32*]

In conclusion, I would like to say that no progress in Cyprus can be achieved by mixing priorities. The objective should be first to find a just solution to the Cyprus problem, and not to create faits accomplis. In Cyprus the important requirement is to base a solution on realities. It is necessary to be sincere, realistic, constructive and creative, and not to confuse wishful thinking with the facts.

Mr. Sarris (Greece): What the Deputy Permanent Representative of Turkey has just said is a repetition of what he said last year on this issue. I do not intend to reply again to statements made last year.

I would merely add this: It is Turkey, not Greece, that consistently undermines international law and the United Nations Charter by flagrantly violating their most fundamental principles — that is, by its application of a traditional foreign policy of aggression, invasion and military occupation towards neighbouring countries; by its custom of threatening the use of force and war; by its continuous promotion of territorial and other expansionist claims; and last, but not least, by its complete disregard for its international commitments with regard to respect for human rights, including minority rights.

And now Turkey insults the General Assembly — thereby adding insult to injury — by insisting on distorting the truth through the same false and unsubstantiated allegations. I do not consider these allegations worthy of further discussion in this body.

Mr. Moushoutas (Cyprus): In the 23 years of Turkish invasion and occupation of Cyprus, Turkey has been consistently attempting either to eclipse itself from the scene of the crime of aggression or to cloud the issues of what is known as the "Question of Cyprus".

The representative of Greece very aptly described Turkey's behaviour as double talk and distortion. I agree with him.

Even though differences exist between the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities, especially from the constitutional standpoint, the gist of the problem is not these intercommunal differences but Turkey's act of aggression and continuing occupation of 37 per cent of the territory of Cyprus, the uprooting of 200,000 people from their ancestral homes and lands, the importation of settlers from mainland Turkey into Cyprus so as to change the demographic structure of the island, and the ongoing gross violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Cypriots — Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots alike.

The problem is not about defence expenditures, despite what we have just heard, or about the right of self-defence. After all, under Article 51 of the Charter, States are given the right — indeed they have the duty — of self-defence.

Nor is the problem of Cyprus its Government's application to join the European Union. As we have stated before, Cyprus is neither a colony nor a province of Turkey. It is ludicrous for Turkey to assume it can decide who will and who will not apply for membership in the European Union. And yet, under this ridiculous pretext, Turkey declared the integration and annexation of the occupied part of Cyprus to mainland Turkey — evidence of Ankara's erratic foreign policy, as it was described in the *Wall Street Journal*.

As I have stated, the grave issue facing the United Nations and the Assembly is the Turkish act of aggression compounded by the non-implementation and outright contentious disregarding of solemn Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and decisions. These resolutions demand the withdrawal of the occupation troops, the return of the refugees to their homes and lands, and respect for the human rights of all Cypriots.

Ironically, Turkey voted in favour of the unanimously adopted General Assembly resolution 32/2 (XXIX), which was endorsed by Security Council resolution 365 (1974), and thus rendered mandatory.

General Assembly resolution 37/253 again demands the withdrawal of all occupation troops, affirms the right and the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus over the

whole of its territory, and calls on Member States to assist the Republic to exercise these rights. In order to frustrate the implementation of the provisions of this resolution and to disappear from the scene of the crime, Turkey purported to establish an entity in the occupied areas of Cyprus; it did that as a shield against world condemnation. This entity was declared legally invalid by Security Council resolution 541 (1983), which demands Turkey's withdrawal and calls on the international community not to recognize or in any way to assist this secessionist entity. The provisions of Security Council resolution 541 (1983) were reaffirmed by Security Council resolution 550 (1984) and reiterated in many subsequent resolutions.

For the Turkish representative to speak about treaties and to claim that Turkey has followed the provisions of the Treaty of Guarantee is absolutely unacceptable in the light of the fact that this very Assembly described the presence of the troops there as occupation troops and asked for their withdrawal.

The reason for the lack of progress in finding a solution to the problem of Cyprus in accordance with the report of the Secretary-General in 1994 is the lack of political will on the part of Turkey, which is evidenced by its refusal to withdraw its troops from Cyprus. General Assembly resolution 37/253 very accurately states that the withdrawal of the occupation forces from the Republic of Cyprus is an essential basis for a speedy and mutually acceptable solution to the problem of Cyprus.

The Treaty of Guarantee could not have given Turkey the right to use military force because that would have been contrary to Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter — and the demands of the Charter are superior to any treaty.

The President: The general debate at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly has come to an end. Before declaring it closed, I would like to make some concluding remarks. This is not a summary of the debate since it is neither my task nor my responsibility to do that.

It is my conviction that the General Assembly debate has proved once again the unique and important role of the General Assembly within our Organization. In the course of the general debate the major global issues facing the world community today were addressed at the highest political level. We had the privilege of hearing statements by 176 speakers. Among them were 18 Heads of State, one Crown Prince, 14 Prime Ministers, 16 Deputy Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers, 111 Ministers for Foreign Affairs, four other Ministers, and 12 Heads of Delegations.

Providing statistics at the end of the general debate has become a long-standing tradition, but I would urge us not to dismiss those numbers as mere "facts for the record", but, instead, to look at them as vivid testimony to the universal character of our Organization. And as for those critics who tend to view the general debate as simply an occasion for generalized statements, I think the past two weeks have shown Member States engaged in an eloquent, vigorous, focused and thought-provoking discussion on issues of global significance.

Can we do even better? No question about it, and it is therefore not surprising that many speakers emphasized the need to strengthen the role of the General Assembly and to streamline its procedures. We should spare no effort to make sure that the General Assembly, as a unique world parliament, conducts its business in the most efficient, pragmatic and productive manner. Now, in that context, the general debate performs many important functions and one of the key ones among them, I think, is that of an accurate barometer of world opinion, especially as it pertains to the United Nations. If we look at the past 12 days from that angle, I believe we would be justified in concluding that the barometer is pointing towards "good weather".

We all recall, however, that only a couple of years ago — ironically on the eve of the Organization's golden anniversary — there were ominous clouds of disappointment and disillusionment on the horizon. As the Organization came under a barrage of harsh and often destructive criticism from different quarters, there was a sense of uncertainty and doubt about the Organization's ability to change and to adapt itself to a post-cold-war world. True, there was no shortage of appeals for reform; but, in the absence of a realistic blueprint, the gap between exhortations and practical deeds seemed to be hard to bridge.

After listening carefully to the statements during the debate, I am convinced that the discussion has reflected a major change in perceptions and attitudes. I think that on the issue of reform we have made a crucial step from the quicksands of the doubtful to the firm grounds of the possible.

Virtually every speaker addressed the issue of reform and commented on the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/950), which contains a concrete programme for renewing the United Nations. It was one of the major themes during the general debate. In this respect, it would be fair to state that the efforts

undertaken by the Secretary-General to reform the United Nations has obtained strong political support. Practically all delegations welcomed the comprehensive reform package of the Secretary-General and most supported its endorsement in principle.

Delegations emphasized the comprehensive nature of the reform package. There was also a broad focus on the Secretary-General's efforts to transform the leadership and management structure of the Organization. It was recognized that we need to ensure that reform is undertaken as a concerted effort to redesign and strengthen this Organization for the task it would be expected to perform in the period ahead, rather than merely as a cost-cutting exercise. At the same time, a number of speakers referred to the fact that certain reform proposals would require further consideration. The importance of reflecting the needs and aspirations of all Member States was stressed, as was the need for consensus and full participation.

The focus placed by Member States on the question of United Nations reform during the general debate, both in a general and in a detailed fashion, emphasizes that delegations recognized the need for expeditious action on the issue. This debate has made it clear that Member States want to move rapidly to provide the Secretary-General with the mandate and the direction he requires to move ahead with his reform programme.

It is very important not to lose the momentum and to translate the high level of political will and commitment demonstrated during the general debate in favour of the proposed programme of reform into prompt concrete actions by the General Assembly.

There is a clear awareness of the critical moment the United Nations has reached. We can succeed in our joint efforts to build up a more effective and more viable Organization and to make it better prepared for the new millennium. To attain this goal, we should be guided by reason, tolerance and determination.

The reform process of the United Nations will be incomplete if it does not embrace the Security Council. The general debate has reaffirmed the broad agreement that the reform of this organ is of great importance for its functioning and legitimacy. In this respect, views were focused on the enlargement of the membership of the Council, taking into account equitable representation, new realities and the interests of various regions. It was also felt by many that there is a need to democratize the Security Council and to increase the transparency of its procedures and working methods.

There is also a broad understanding that the reform of the Security Council is a key issue for the United Nations that demands a well thought out and well-balanced decision.

The urgent need to put the United Nations on a sound financial footing has been identified by Member States as a prerequisite for the successful reform and functioning of the Organization. The theme of continuing financial difficulties facing the United Nations was a clear pessimistic undertone in the general debate. I have noted strong appeals to those who are in arrears to fulfil their legal obligations and to pay outstanding dues to the Organization. At the same time, it was pointed out that the time has come to adopt a new scale of assessments, based on agreed principles, which would reflect the capacity of Member States to pay. The reform process will be substantially facilitated if we reach a consensus decision on this very important issue this year.

It is very important that at this period of renewal and change, the United Nations received the full confidence of Member States during the general debate, which reaffirmed its essential goals: maintaining international peace and security, enhancing cooperation for development, strengthening the role of international law, promoting and encouraging respect for human rights, and providing humanitarian assistance.

The general debate has demonstrated that the international community continues to concentrate its efforts on the resolution of the most acute problems facing humankind. The concern of the Member States remained focused on areas of instability. The conflicts in the Middle East and in the Great Lakes region of Africa, in Central Asia and in the Balkans were particularly disturbing. The internationalization of problems such as terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering and corruption, illicit arms trading and environmental pollution was also placed at the centre of the debate.

The debate justifies the conclusion that an adequate response to these and other issues is to be delivered through a continuing process of negotiations; a resolute policy of disarmament, both of weapons of mass destruction and of conventional weapons; the promotion of sustainable development; the further strengthening of human rights machinery; and the gradual reorientation of

the United Nations peacekeeping activities toward preventive diplomacy.

In the political area, a clear trend has emerged towards focusing on prevention rather than on peacemaking and peace enforcement. The emphasis was put on the preventive presence of troops or their rapid deployment to avoid an escalation of hostilities as well as on post-conflict peace-building as a way of preventing the recurrence of crises in the future.

The promotion of economic and social progress, the eradication of poverty, ways to ensure the widest possible participation in an expanding world economy, and regional integration and cooperation justifiably occupied a predominant place in the general debate.

It was clearly stressed that the process of globalization, which is now bringing both opportunities and dangers to Member States, should lead to an increasingly integrated approach to development and benefit all nations. The barriers that are still maintained in order to hamper access to foreign markets and the discriminatory and protectionist practices in international trade must be eliminated in order to bring a vision of global free trade to reality.

Achieving sustained growth and sustainable development must remain a major global objective. There are persistent problems, such as lack of safe water, threats to biological diversity, ozone loss, global warming, declining land productivity and desertification. Sustained growth is essential to the economic and social development of all countries. Its promotion will improve the standards of living through the eradication of poverty, hunger and illiteracy.

The general debate has also witnessed support for encouraging human rights, democratization and good governance, as well as the advancement of women and protection of the rights of children and persons belonging to minorities. The need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in these fields has been stressed by many speakers. It is therefore our responsibility to protect the philosophy of the Charter of the United Nations and further develop the role of this Organization in the economic and social spheres.

It is also our responsibility not to lose the spirit of cooperation and commitment at the high political level that has been demonstrated in the general debate. We should direct our future work in the plenary and the Main Committees in such a way as to embody them in the decision-making process. At present, this Organization depends to a decisive extent on what we are saying or doing. It is in our hands to agree on what kind of United Nations we wish to have in the future.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the representatives of all Member States who participated in the general debate for their cooperation and support of this presidency. This cooperation allowed us to begin plenary meetings punctually and to conclude the general debate on time. We managed to achieve the maximum use of conference-servicing facilities as well as national savings for this Organization, a goal to which we must continually subscribe. I will continue to count on Members' cooperation for the remainder of the session so that we may be able to conclude our work at the prescribed time.

I am also pleased to indicate that, during the past three weeks, I have noticed that more women delegates have been participating in our deliberations. This has given a more gender-balanced representation to our meetings.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 9?

It was so decided.

Announcement

The President: I should like to inform representatives that, in connection with agenda item 157, entitled "United Nations reform: measures and proposals", an informal list of measures and proposals summarizing the principal actions and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General has been prepared by the Secretariat. This informal list is available in English only and has just been distributed in the General Assembly Hall.

I would like again to emphasize that this is an informal document and therefore is available in English only.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.